

upheld in their courts the charters and the recorded privileges of the lords. It is a picturesque and forcible appeal to the rude sense of justice in the uneducated, to complain 'that parchment being scribbled o'er should undo a man,' and the destruction of charters and manor-rolls was perhaps the most universal feature of the Rising. But a feature scarcely less marked was the demand for new charters confirming privileges won by the destruction of the old. The rebels did not set themselves, as one of the chroniclers declares they did, to root out the arts of reading and writing, and to kill all who practised or taught them. Such an exaggeration, natural to persons incensed at the destruction of many valuable documents, is quite out of keeping with the recorded aims and actions of the rioters. Lawyers and official clerks were special objects of animosity, but not clerks and learned men as such. Besides, the attempt of the rebels to secure by written charters all that was conceded, and their childish confidence in the certain validity of these new documents, would alone show that they had no wish to create a Utopia of illiterates. In the same way, although speculations on communism had been rife for many years, and may have helped the spirit of rebellion, no formal demand for any such reorganisation of society was anywhere advanced in the summer of '81. It is the same with this charge as with that of designs to murder the whole upper class. These diabolical intentions are based on supposed confessions, which might easily be extorted from individuals, or still more easily put in their mouths by irresponsible annalists.¹ Even supposing that one or two leaders had such ideas in their heads, they certainly did not get support from their followers.

The Eising in the country districts had, for its foremost object, to secure complete economic and personal freedom. With this end manor-rolls were burnt, and larger or smaller bodies of men sent up to London to obtain charters of liberation from the King. The St. Albans villeins not only got from London a special royal charter for themselves as well as the general charter of liberation, but even forced the Abbot to write another for them himself, sealed with the seal of the

¹ Wals., ii. 10.